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ABSTRACT

Begun in 1965, the Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) has focused on the needs of migrant farmworkers and their children. RCMA considers the fields of education, health, and housing as the areas of greatest impact upon migrant children. In its major role as a catalyst, RCMA has worked with various individuals with common objectives of seeking advances for migrant children in areas of child care, child development, education, health services, and housing. Among these individuals are Florida Farm Bureau Federation's Director of Public Affairs, United Migrants Association's Executive Director, Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association's Executive Vice President, and the State Governor. Based largely upon the unity expressed by these individuals, concrete decisions have been made by state government bodies and agencies in areas such as child services planning for farmworker assistance. Focusing on RCMA's objectives, efforts, and achievements, this report discusses the need for dropout prevention among migrant children in Florida schools, the Migrant Head Start centers, RCMA Title XX child centers, the Migrant Early Childhood Program, RCMA staffing policy, migrant health programs, Ford Foundation Program, East Coast Special Effort Program for handicapped children, and housing for farmworkers. (NQA)

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A Report On The Migrant Child

Redlands Christian Migrant Association

HALF IN . . .
HALF OUT

Wendell N. Rollason
executive director

January 1985

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Immokalee, Florida

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Half In . . . Half Out

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Half In . . . Half Out

FOREWORD

Half in and half out seems an appropriate phrase to describe the plight of the migrant child in today's society. This youngster is so beset by the negatives of two cultures that words such as "caught" or "trapped" instantly come to mind in any attempt to explain or discuss the tragic circumstances of life that are stacked against these children wherever in this nation their families are based or travel. The general picture of their future is one of bleakness.

In Florida this bleakness is being confronted by a handful of determined men and women. Hope -- bolstered by political muscle -- has entered the scene. Some progress has been made. Not much yet, but some. Of greater significance is the necessary strategic positioning that has been achieved, the unusual coming together of disparate forces, the potential that now exists for substantial changes and progress in the near future.

The movement afoot in Florida pointedly ignores the past 30 years of good guys/bad guys crusades that martyrized the farmworker and overly assaulted the grower. It ignores the headlines and television drama, the controversial facts -- real or fancied, the myths, the polarization. Instead, the movement opted for achievements. The migrant child was chosen as the focal point for change. Representative farmworker leaders and parents, farmworker advocates, growers, grower organizations, elected officials, government agencies and church groups are now quietly marshalling forces and resources for concerte

efforts to remove the bleakness of the migrant child's future from the scene in Florida. No formal coalitions have been built. No new organizations formed. No signed statements have been produced or even sought. Deeds take precedence over words. Individuals of influence within recognized power bases of their own are free to participate or back away from any given project. The other guy's limitations or strictures are understood and accepted. The eye is kept upon the objective of the moment.

The Redlands Christian Migrant Association is fortunate in being able to play the role of catalyst in this whole process. Others provide ingredients of power, influence, political muscle. The effect of men sitting around the table, shoulder to shoulder in firm support of each other on migrant child issues, can have a dramatic impact on observers and other participants who know that on a different stage these same men may be sharp opponents. It is a unique movement. It is a movement of individual commitments. And it's working.

THE TAMPA TRIBUNE
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Tribune Editorials

Farmers Rate Laurels For Aiding Migrants

Is this the best way we can grow
'our big orchards?

Is this the best way we can grow
'our good fruit?

To fall like dry leaves and rot on
your topsoil.

And be known by no name ex-
'cept deportees? — Woody Guthrie

MOST FRUIT and vegetables are harvested today as they were decades ago when the words of that song were written to protest the insensitive, often inhumane exploitation of migrant farm laborers.

Poor migrants still bring in Florida's harvest. No machines have been invented to effectively replace human hands. Many of these workers still live in squalid, overcrowded conditions. Many are deported as illegal immigrants.

Yet clearly, the life of the farm worker has improved tremendously. Many dedicated people are working to make the pickers' lives less atrocious. Among them is a quiet, often overlooked group, the farm owners themselves.

Since the late 1970s, the leaders in the agriculture industry have been strongly urging improved social conditions, better education and better housing for farm workers. This conservative business group has not blown its horn nor has it noisily spun its wheels, but it has found solid traction to help raise standards for the laborers.

Last year growers donated more than $100,000 to day care centers for migrants. Powerful agricultural groups successfully pushed for an annual state appropriation of $2 million to educate preschool children of migrants. This is in addition to the $20 million the federal government gives Florida for special education for migrant children.

Studies show the migrant children are much less likely to drop out of school if they attend a pre-school program and start first grade on a par with children from conventional homes.

One of the most successful advocates of a better life for the poor farm worker is Wendell Rollason, executive director of Redlands Christian Migrant Association and chairman of the Governor's Advisory Council on Farmworker Affairs.

He praises the agriculture industry for forcefully backing his group's preschool programs and other projects to improve social conditions for field hands and their families. He has talked and worked with thousands of Florida migrants, and understands their problems. Migrants most need decent housing, and the farmers also realize this, he said.

"Without it, all the other goals of improved education, physical health, mental health, less child problems, etc., are infinitely less achievable," Rollason said.

In 1979, with strong agricultural support, the Florida Farmworkers Housing Assistance Act was passed. It provides $2.8 million to help construct low-cost rural apartments. Through loans and grants, known as "seed money," this one appropriation has enabled rural housing authorities in Florida to qualify for $38 million from the federal Farmers Home Administration.

Local housing authorities have built hundreds of apartments near the fields, and have repaid the loans, so that of the original $2.8 million in the state fund, $2.6 million remains.

Agricultural leaders also are working for better health insurance for farm workers, supporting emergency unemployment payments when weather disasters destroy crops, and keeping farmers updated on labor laws.

Too, the farmers help find workers jobs with northern apple growers when the Florida season is over.

George Sorn, general manager of the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association, says it makes good business sense for his and similar organizations to improve the lives of the migrants and to get the children out of the fields and into preschool programs.

Unfortunately, many county and city governments are far behind the agricultural industry in supporting the farm laborers. Weak zoning and minimal housing standards allow slumlords to operate overpriced and overcrowded migrant villages.

While some still view the farm worker as a beast of burden, most growers now treat them as human beings. Much has changed since a 1948 airplane crash in California inspired Woody Guthrie to write the song "Deportees," after these headlines appeared: "Mexican deportees, four die in California." The 28 deportees who were killed remained nameless in the press. The late folk singer asked if we have to treat our workers so poorly, not acknowledge that they have names and not care if they die.

As it was two generations ago, fruit picking and stoop labor is temporary, relatively low-paying, and strenuous. Although no better way to harvest the fruit has been found, conditions are improving. Florida's agriculture industry deserves recognition as the farm workers' friend, because farm groups have helped make many significant improvements politically possible.

Monday, December 3 1984

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Four Men and One Other

In achieving changes for migrant children, RCMA plays an effective role as catalyst in a rather harsh arena peopled with tough participants. As individuals, these men frequently seem to typify characteristics of the popular song phrase of some years ago "you don't mess around with Jim." The chemistry involved is difficult to explain, if not impossible, but by now it is clear that RCMA has the capacity to bring together divergent forces. The dynamics of this convergence have produced encouraging results.

Beginning its existence in 1965 in Homestead, Florida RCMA remained in its original area serving children in three labor camps for its first 10 years. During this time, its staff established an unusual record and reputation in caring for farmworker children, one that traveled out of our southeast Florida farming area into the rest of the state. We were asked to develop child centers in numerous other regions. Slowly we spread northward, funded by the state's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services under Title XX of the Social Security Act. Over a seven-year period we opened 12 new centers. In 1981 East Coast Migrant Head Start Project of Arlington, Virginia asked RCMA to become its delegate agency in Florida. This resulted in 16 RCMA Migrant Head Start Centers. And by then we had taken over the Migrant Early Childhood program in Ruskin at the request of the Hillsborough County Public Schools.

Also in 1981 Governor Bob Graham asked RCMA's executive director to chair his Governor's Advisory Council on Farmworker Affairs, a 25-person group with representation from farmworkers, agriculture, state government, advocates and the general public.

Since 1981 RCMA has been in the position to effect change . . . which is easy to say. Catalyst is the best way to say it. That is the RCMA major role.

We have worked with scores of persons within common objectives of seeking advances for migrant children in areas of child care, child development, education, health services and housing. All of these deserve mention and words of appreciation, which may be possible at another place, another time, but not here in this report.

However, it is important to note the role of five individuals. Four in significant moments of harmony have hacked out the path for progress by others to follow in this new movement: Allison French, Director of Public Affairs of the Florida Farm Bureau Federation; Benito Lopez, Executive Director of the United Migrants Association; George Sorn, Executive Vice President of the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association; and the writer of this report. This partnership-of-sorts is largely an unspoken one. Over these past few years of increasing association with one another we found that our views converged at a number of points along the spectrum of "farmworker problems." An unwritten willingness to collaborate at those points has resulted. We know where we disagree and shelve those differences whenever we focus on the needs of migrant

Tribune photos by JOHN COFFEEN

Al French

Benito Lopez

George Sorn

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children. Based largely upon the unity expressed by these four men, concrete decisions have been made by state government bodies and agencies in areas of child care, school dropout prevention, education, new housing, health care, and emergency planning for farmworker assistance.

Other than encouragement by Hope, which always must be present to spark achievement, one is heartened by the solid gut feeling that this progress under these four men is only in its infancy.

oOo

There is a fifth man -- Bob Graham, Governor of the State of Florida.

When in the Florida State Senate, Bob Graham was labeled "Mr. Education." In the governor's chair he has maintained that leadership, that intense interest in education. Aside from decent housing, education is the migrant child's greatest need.

In the entire field of farmworker problems, Governor Graham has furnished steady leadership. His Governor's Advisory Council on Farmworker Affairs has provided a forum of prominence through which positive actions to meet numerous migrant needs, already noted, are being addressed. Department heads of state governmental agencies with mandated responsibilities over services to farmworkers are well aware of the boss' interest in these matters. Indeed, the governor has placed men in charge of those departments who, themselves, have personal commitments to serve farmworker families.

Gov. Bob Graham being taught how to fingerpaint during his work day at the RCMA day care center in the South Dade Labor Camp.

An individual of compassion and concern, Bob Graham has responded vigorously to our complaints on the inadequacies -- indeed, the virtual non-existence -- of dropout prevention services for migrant school children in Florida, among whom the rate of disappearance from school is a staggering 84%, a subject to be dealt with later on in this report.

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Both as chairman of his Advisory Council on Farmworker Affairs and as executive director of RCMA, the writer is granted ready access to the governor. With top state staff in attendance our positions are fully discussed and usually endorsed -- subject to legislative concurrence when that is necessary. On the next page is the agenda of our latest meeting which lasted an hour and fifteen minutes on January 2, 1985.

Governor Graham has established a strong supportive atmosphere in official Tallahassee within which Messrs. French, Lopez, Sorn and Rollason -- plus scores of other collaborators -- pursue our objectives in behalf of migrant children. Without his support, his political leadership, we wouldn't be where we are today.

oOo

Although this report, as it proceeds, will deal with RCMA projects, RCMA efforts, and RCMA achievements it should be borne in mind that the support for increased services to migrant children existing today in significant centers of power throughout Florida is attributable in great measure to individuals outside RCMA. The credit for the outstanding use of existing resources and the loving care provided in RCMA's 34 centers and programs belongs to RCMA's committed farmworker staffers in each of these centers and the dedicated RCMA professionals who chart the course of our child development work and the successful training of our lay staff.

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Governor Bob Graham

FROM: Wendell N. Rollason

SUBJECT: Agenda for January 2nd Meeting

DATE: January 2, 1985

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1. Farmworker Emergency Plan

   - ultimate goal of Plan must be to provide financial resources to sustain large numbers of workers unemployed due to natural disaster.

2. Rural Housing Plan

   - establish dependable continuous funding source, such as fifth-cent documentar tax.

3. Primary Health Care Programming by State

   - need for 10% set-aside of funds for State identified, multi-county projects under direction of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

4. Child Care Services for the At-Risk Child

   - clear demarcation must be legislatively maintained between additional slots provided for at-risk children and those additional slots provided other children.

5. Migrant Child Education Program

   - need for $2.5 million minimun appropriation for Early Childhood Program.

6. RCMA 20th Anniversary Dinner

   - request Governor's attendence and address; suggested topic: The Minority Child in Florida's Education Plans.

WNR:vg

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An Outline of the RCMA Objectives

The Redlands Christian Migrant Association, as one of the groups in Florida seeking improvements in behalf of migrant farmworkers, has chosen to concentrate primarily upon the needs of their children. In this effort we have established our own agenda. We seek and have gained the collaboration of others in two-way street relationships. We seek additional state and federal revenues -- not for our organization alone, but for all agencies providing services to migrant and seasonal farmworker children.

RCMA is giving priority attention to the fields of education, health, and housing as the areas of greatest impact (negative and positive) upon this group of children. These are the societal areas in Florida where the migrant children suffer the greatest shortfalls in services. Inadequat funding is inevitably a factor. However, we find that the inappropriate usage of existing financial resources, ignorance of the true needs of these children, plus bureaucratic obstinacy and priorities of "turf" combine to form the greatest barrier to improving services to migrant children and their families.

Consequently, the major challenge, restructuring government priorities, is one that is achievable but not painless. RCMA prefers working behind the scenes. When this succeeds we leave it there. When it doesn't we generally opt to go public on the issue irrespective of the pummelling which inevitably ensues.

In the following list are RCMA objectives from both the non-confrontational and the confrontational categories.

Education

- Persuade the Governor and Cabinet (State Board of Education) to return the federally funded Migrant Education Program to its original status of a true statewide program so that a county-by-county continuity exists in educational services for migrant children in the state.

- Persuade the Governor and Cabinet to formally recognize that the single greatest educational need of migrant children in the state is to remain in school, and thus mandate the use of at least $2,500,000 in Migrant Education funds to establish an aggressive migrant child dropout prevention program aimed at reducing substantially the state's present 84 percent dropout rate.

- Establish among migrant parents and school authorities alike a recognition of the great need for comprehensive involvement of these parents in the education of their children as the major tool for bringing about a reduction of the dropout rate.

- Establish close interagency collaboration among Migrant Head Start, Migrant Early Childhood, and Title XX farmworker preschool programs throughout Florida for the interchange of assistance and outside resources.

- Obtain for farmworker families additional state and federal funding for infant and preschool child care services so that less of these children are subjected to the serious physical dangers of the fields and groves of this state.

Health

- Create a broader awareness of the unmet health needs of children of the rural poor, an awareness that will result in the channeling of increased resources into rural areas of the state.

- Obtain funding with which to establish under RCMA a program serving handicapped infants and small children of farmworker families and other rural poor.

- Provide an "outside" voice strongly supportive of the non-profit Primary Health Care Clinics presently operating in rural Florida.

- Establish an advocacy posture in behalf of Florida's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

- Assist the state in firmly establishing both policy and reality of a Farmworker Emergency Plan that has the capability of addressing successfully the plight of thousands of farmworker families made jobless as a result of natural disasters, such as freezes or hurricanes.

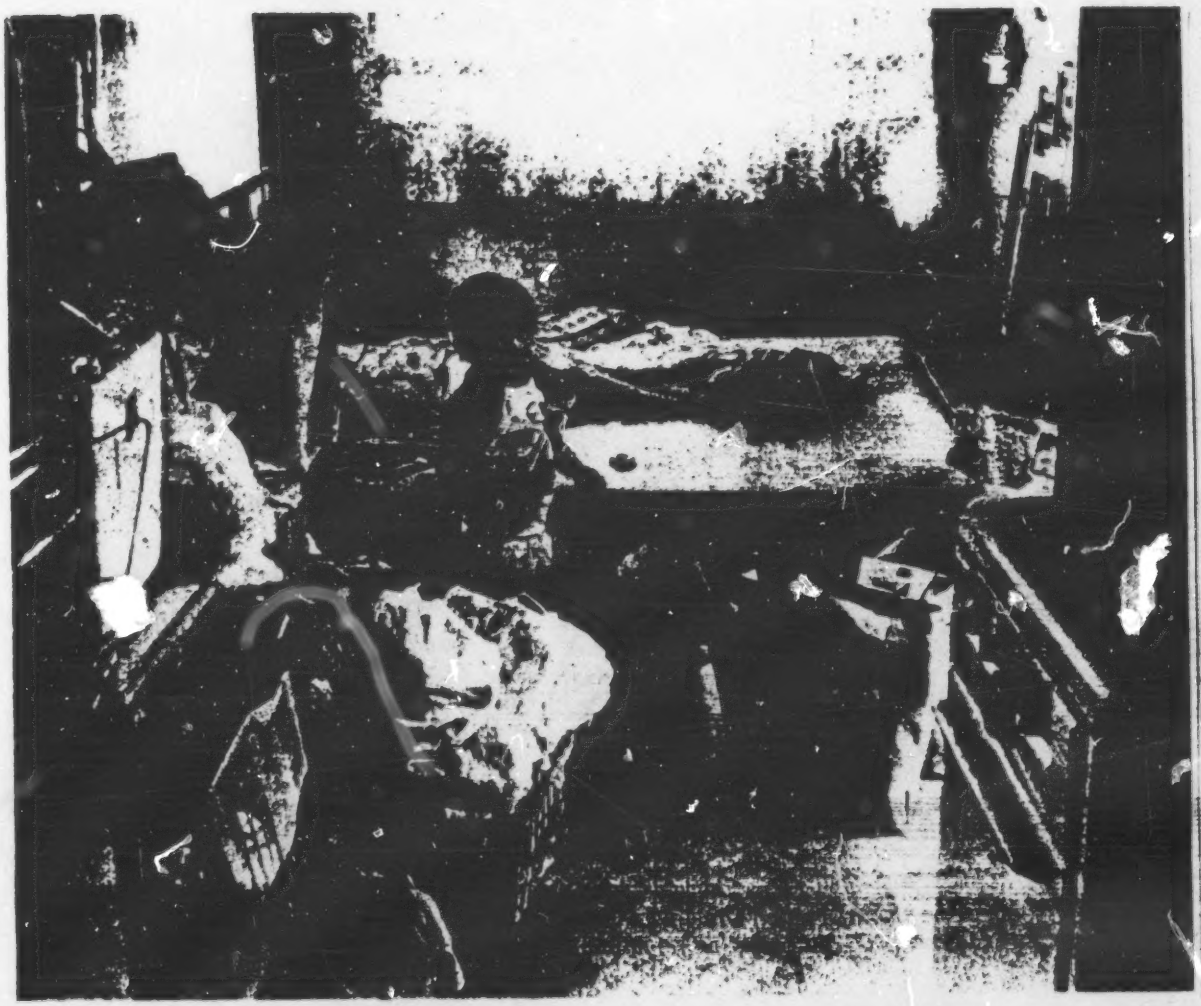
Housing

- Persuade the Governor and the State Legislature to support and create a dedicated trust fund, from the proceeds of which can come the ability to establish a rural housing program that will begin addressing the farmworkers' single greatest need: decent housing.

- Establish a church-oriented advocacy group in support of housing needs of farmworkers.

- Encourage the agriculture industry to become actively supportive and involved in the state and federal programming for new rural housing.

- Establish an advocacy posture in behalf of Florida's Department of Community Affairs and its rural housing program.



Rents of $75 and $100 per week are not uncommon for dilapidated trailers in Central Florida citrus areas.

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Migrant Children in Florida Schools
. . . The Need for Dropout Prevention

In 1983 the combined county school systems of the state identified 54,563 migrant children in Florida, ranging from age 3 to age 17. By heavy majority these youngsters are of Mexican heritage. Other ethnic groups represented in the count include American Blacks, Haitians, Puerto Ricans, Whites, Vietnamese, American Indians and even some Indians from Guatemala. There is reasonable doubt that this counting of little heads included children of the Mexican farmworkers illegally in the state with any great degree of accuracy. These families "fade" when word spreads that someone with a clipboard is in the vicinity asking questions.

In the RCMA centers approximately 85 percent of the enrolled children are of Mexican ethnicity. Yet the observations we are making here apply equally to children of other ethnic groups. Being half in and half out of two cultures -- and at the bottom economic layer of both -- heaps enormous burdens upon these children which become manifest when they enter public schools. Farmworker families almost universally have no capabilities of independently assisting their children to prepare for entry to what is for them the strange and frightening new world of our state's anglo-oriented public schools. The majority of schools, unaware or indifferent, offer little or no effective aid to ease this transition.

This lack of a <u>sustained</u>, empathetic interest by the schools quickly results in migrant family perceptions that "they don't want our children in school." This parental reaction,

in turn, hastens the child's alienation. Thus migrant youngsters by great majority are foredoomed to failure before they first set foot in kindergarten. This surfaces very quickly. "We can see it developing even in kindergarten" one very knowledgeable county school official informed RCMA.

The act of dropping out of school by migrant children in Florida begins at third grade -- age 9 or 10. By the end of seventh grade, 65 percent are gone. By twelfth grade 84 percent have left the public schools. Even of the 16 out of every one hundred who reach the senior class, a portion leaves before graduation. As an estimate, probably no more than 7 or 8 migrant children out of the original each 100 entering first grade actually receive high school diplomas.

This is not a tragedy peculiar to Florida. It is nationwide wherever migrant children are recorded as significant sectors of the school population. For example, California and Texas school publications each give 90 percent as their dropout rates for this group. The superintendent for schools in the State of Washington says that his state's rate is between 93 and 95 percent. Nonetheless, these appalling figures of other states are of no comfort to those of us in Florida who are concerned with the tragic deadending of these children educationally in our state.

RCMA's concern over this issue has existed for a number of years, a period during which we have accomplished little. Our efforts back in 1979, for example, centered on attempting to arouse more than a passing interest in the matter on the part of the state's Bureau of Compensatory Education, which oversees the Florida Migrant Education Program. This came to naught.

—Herald Photo by C. A. MITCHELL

An RCMA afterschool tutoring session

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In the intervening years, as time permitted the limited available RCMA staff attention, we continued to explore the dropout problem, its causes, its possible solutions. We reached the following conclusions, none overly original, but all are workable and have been proven effective:

- To stand any chance of success, a plan to lower substantially Florida's migrant dropout rate should have the zeal of a crusade and the power and commitment to sustain that zeal.

- Comprehensive parent involvement was identified as the single most important ingredient that must be present in the plan.

- The schools alone cannot successfully address this problem, although they must be in the leadership and be the primary professional participants in any plan to combat the problem successfully.

- Non-profit agencies, such as RCMA, with the capability and experience working with migrant families outside of "normal" school hours must be involved as key components of the plan.

- Other major segments of the community such as the agricultural industry, churches, civic groups, and private, concerned individuals must be enlisted in the total effort.

In two appearances before the State Board of Education (Governor and Cabinet members) in April of 1984 RCMA detailed the problem of migrant child dropouts and proposed solutions which involved the above points.

Unquestionably feelings were bruised in this process. Nonetheless the Board immediately directed the inclusion of dropout prevention programming in the state's Migrant Education Plan, stipulating that non-profit agencies be involved.

Further, the Board reactivated its dormant Task Force on Migrant Education to examine further the State Plan and make detailed recommendations to the Board, recommendations which will focus on -- but not be limited to -- establishing a comprehensive dropout prevention program. These proposals, if accepted by the Board, will be incorporated in the 1986 State Plan.

Opposition has been generated by much of this. Unfortunately, as anticipated, this seems provoked by fears for "turf" rather than representing differences on child-based issues.

RCMA and its associates in this effort have considerable confidence that our position will prevail so that comprehensive community-wide and state-wide efforts will be launched in behalf of migrant children and their complete education in Florida's public schools.

When that point of launching is reached it will only be signaling the beginning of an inch-by-inch struggle over the course of the next decade. We are committed to, and believe achievable a slashing reduction of 40-50 percent in today's 84 percent migrant child dropout rate.

Policy change reflects Cabinet desire for statewide approach to problem.

Agencies for migrants to get state school aid

TALLAHASSEE — (UPI) — Drop-out rates higher than 50 percent among migrant farmworkers' children should be addressed by private voluntary agencies as well as local school boards, Gov. Bob Graham and the Cabinet have decided.

The decision Thursday reflects a willingness on the part of Graham and the Cabinet to consider a statewide approach to the problem, said farmworker advocate Wendell Rollason.

At Rollason's urging, Graham and the Cabinet adopted a change in a Florida plan to be submitted to the federal government. The plan tells how the state will use federal money earmarked for migrant education.

Local school boards would have decided how to use all the money under a plan submitted by the state Department of Education for approval by Graham and the Cabinet, who also serve as the state Board of Education.

Instead, nonprofit voluntary agencies such as the Redland Christian Migrant Association, Rollason's group, will compete with school districts for $400,000 of the total $20.2 million.

"Governor, the remark you made that maybe we should take a look at the statewide approach is right on target," Rollason said. "In individual counties there are exciting, different things going on. But they are isolated out because there is not a state plan."

Graham and the Cabinet plan at their next meeting to confirm appointments to a statewide task force on migrant education issues. On a motion by Insurance Commissioner Bill Gunter, the board voted to instruct the task force to place a high priority on the migrant drop-out problem.

"Mr. Rollason made a very damning presentation two weeks ago," Graham told DOE officials. "I underscore that the Congress looks to us, the people in this room," to make sure the federal money is well spent.

At a Cabinet meeting April 5, Rollason pointed out that the state's own figures show the migrant drop-out rate could be a high as 84 percent. State studies peg the rate at 55 percent, but the study has a 29 percent rate of error.

He said the plan developed by DOE for using the migrant education money was doomed because it was not comprehensive enough.

Rollason said the plan is "too little, too late" because it failed to involve t agriculture industry, churches, civic orga zations and other groups he said cou contribute to a solution.

Finally, Rollason said at the April meeting, schools should not be in charge the programs because migrant parents thi their children are discriminated against l local school officials.

At Thursday's meeting, Rollason brou up another point.

"There are substantial changes in t patterns of Florida agriculture," he sa "Many citrus plantings are moving south.

"So we are going to see counties gain migrant children and others losing migra children. In the past there has been too mu rigidity in the [migrant education] plan th did not allow this to be taken into accoun

The Miami Herald / Saturday, April 21, 1984

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A firm anchor for any future dropout prevention efforts among migrant students in the public schools is presently well established and flourishing in three systems now serving preschool age migrant children in all major agricultural areas of the state. A remarkable job is being done by all three. When the public schools consciously pick up the migrant child and his parents where the preschool centers leave off they will have within their grasp the opportunity to continue and expand that child-and-parents' eagerness for education, which those preschool centers have instilled.

Migrant Head Start Centers

Make no mistake about it, in Florida the program with strongest commitment to education of migrant children is Migrant Head Start. Its resources and performance matches that commitment, although there is great need for doubling its present 26 federally funded centers in the state.

Those three and four year-olds fortunate enough to be enrolled in one of those centers are virtually assured of entering public school kindergarten classes with a developmental level at par with their average peer from middleclass families. This truly is a remarkable accomplishment, one that demonstrates year after year what can be done educationally for these migrant children in higher grades.

Migrant Head Start centers in Florida are part of a continuum up the entire eastern seaboard of the country under the leadership of the East Coast Migrant Head Start Project based in Arlington, Virginia. The system under East Coast provides

a continuity of education, health, and social services to farmworker families and their children as they move up and down the east coast migrant stream.

In Florida, the Redlands Christian Migrant Association is their delegate agency (subgrantee) for 16 centers, while East Coast itself directly operates another 10 centers.

RCMA Title XX Farmworker Child Centers

Child care funded under Title XX of the Social Security Act is a "bare bones" affair in comparison to the per-child provisions of Migrant Head Start. Nonetheless, with experience and the use of other community resources RCMA has been able to achieve child development progress comparable to Migrant Head Start. Title XX centers, however, cannot furnish equal health services or family social services. RCMA operates 18 Title XX centers.

Jimmy Rodriguez, 4, and Laticia Hall, 4, receive language training at an RCMA center

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Migrant Early Childhood Program

While Migrant Education programs operate in 33 Florida county public school systems, its Early Childhood components exist in but 19 county school districts, plus four Early Childhood programs operated by non-profit groups. (At the request of the Hillsborough County Schools, RCMA operates the Ruskin Early Childhood program.)

This is an excellent program, serving approximately 2,000 migrant preschoolers ages 3 and 4. Certainly its child development record, its ability to place these preschoolers into kindergarten on a par with their peers from middleclass families is equal to that of Migrant Head Start. This holds true for most counties in which the program operates.

However, its ability to develop its parents to play important roles in the educational progress of their children is inhibited by numerous factors in the heavy majority of counties. (But it is important to note that several counties are exceptions to this criticism.) Excellent local staffs find that unusual type initiatives on their part are soon squelched by school superiors. This is one of the problems. There has been no energetic or inspiring leadership at the state level. There is little capacity for the program's professionals to work with the families other than during school hours when, of course, the migrant parent is working out in the fields or groves. Regrettably, in some counties the program is used as a "dumping ground" for tenured teachers who have washed out in other school assignments. In some counties, union contract terms have the effect of prohibiting the employment of migrants as teacher aides. This results in insufficient numbers of essential bilingual staff, and an insufficient number of staff who understand migrant

families and their points of view. Without these two essentials any program serving migrant children is seriously handicapped. However, we feel that a number of these negatives can be changed with a stronger statewide approach.

It is appropriate to note that at the initiative of RCMA -- and with the strong support of the agricultural industry -- the 1979 State Legislature appropriated $2,000,000 in state revenue funds to supplement this Early Childhood program. This has been an annual appropriation ever since. We are asking the 1985 Legislature for an additional $500,000.

oOo

RCMA has a unique staffing policy in all its child development work. It is one which at times has been viewed askance on first encounter, but one that has received high praise from experienced child development experts who have given time to assess its results. It begins with a staff of former farmworkers who are in charge of virtually all of RCMA's child programming.

Few professionals have the self-assurance to serve in subordinate capacities to former farmworkers whose formal education is high school level, or less. However, in RCMA this is the staffing pattern. Twenty-nine of the 32 child center directors came out of adult work in fields and groves. Each of the six top RCMA regional staffers -- the Area Coordinators -- are former farmworkers, as are the two statewide Deputy Directors. Only one professional, the State Program Coordinator, is in a "command" position. And her "boss" is a former farmworker.

RCMA uses an unusual team approach at all decision-making levels. These former-farmworker/professional teams are the heartbeat of the organization's success with migrant

children and their parents. The concept recognizes the vast chasm between today's middleclass dominant society and that of the migrants. It recognizes the need for "experts" from both worlds. These teams bring both worlds together at the working levels of the migrant child's needs. Each member of each team respects the other's expertise and is governed by it.

The command position of the former farmworker in each team is a powerful message to every migrant family that "Your child can make it on his ability. He can make it over the barriers." Indeed, we find that this team leadership of the former farmworker has been saying something else directly to parents and other RCMA farmworker staff, "You yourself can make it. I did." Inspired by this vibrant example numerous parents and farmworker staff have entered night school or special classes to obtain their GEDs, several have attended and are attending community college classes.

Everywhere RCMA has a center there can be found farmworker parents inspired not only for their children, but for themselves as well. One, Luisa Cuevas, a mother and an RCMA center director, has just earned her AA degree after almost three years of hard study sandwiched in between her RCMA duties and her duties as a wife and mother. She modestly credits her farmworker husband's support and encouragement, along with the "terrific backing I got from RCMA" for her achievement.

As for RCMA's professionals, they form a corp of unusual individuals strongly supportive of an unusual, workable educational and health system that rests upon <u>their</u> hard work and competent professionalism. They are the ones that, through varying years of winnowing-out, have remained to form the backbone of RCMA's college trained team of experts. No calendar, no clock, no hangups bar them from meeting the program's needs.

University of Miami
Miami, Florida 33101

MAILMAN CENTER FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT
P.O. Box 016820 (D-820) (305) 547-6631
Location: 1601 N.W. 12th Avenue

June 27, 1983

To Whom It May Concern:

As Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Psychology with expertise in Special Education, Developmental Psychology and Child Clinical Psychology, I was associated with Redlands Christian Migrant Association's Child Development Centers for several years as a volunteer professional consultant. The Mailman Center for Child Development with which I am affiliated took great interest in R.C.M.A.'s Child Development Center's Activities granting me time to volunteer my services.

Needless to say, I was most impressed with R.C.M.A.'s philosophical approach of having the farm workers as center directors and the significant meaning and symbolic importantance it had for the farm worker community. The interfacing of the experienced, qualified farm worker staff and professional worker contributed to a truly exceptional team which had a close working relationship with the farm worker segment and which rendered outstanding services to the total community.

The dedication and the professional manner in which the farm worker staff performed their duties were truly exceptional. The farm worker staff's ability to relate to the farm worker community was beyond the capabilities of many of the professional team members since the farm worker staff members lived within the farm worker community. However, they had a more perspicacious outlook of the needs of the children and parents and their involvement and the skill as well as warmth with which they performed their duties were truly exceptional.

To have observed and participated in an unique philosophically based program was most exciting and rewarding for me.

If I can be of further assistance, please call on me.

Respectfully,

Sidney Leon, Ph.D.

SL;jrs

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STATE OF FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
TALLAHASSEE 32301

RALPH D. TURLINGTON
COMMISSIONER

June 14, 1983

Mr. Wendell N. Rollason
Executive Director
Redlands Christian Migrant Association
219 North First Street
Immokalee, Florida 33934

Dear Wendell:

Our department is strongly supportive of RCMA's application for additional Migrant Head Start funding. I can think of no organization more qualified nor more deserving. Your fine record over many years of service to migrant children speaks for itself. It is well recognized on the local levels of the many areas you serve that children from RCMA centers enter the public schools well prepared and at a developmental level equal to or above the average. To have achieved this with children carrying the extreme disadvantages inherent in the migrant life style is indeed a substantial accomplishment.

I need mention another RCMA achievement, that of your pioneering work in the use of and the development of staff from the farm worker community. In the units of our Migrant Early Childhood program which RCMA operates in Hillsborough County, with our authorization, you developed a more cost effective teacher/child ratio through the use of qualified aides from the target population. This is now an approved alternative in our Migrant Education State Plan.

The Florida Department of Education is solidly supportive of RCMA based upon recognition and knowledge of its performance and accomplishment with migrant children and their parents. We will continue to work closely with you. Please do not hesitate to call upon me when you believe I can assist.

Sincerely,

Ralph

Ralph D. Turlington

rnh

Affirmative action/equal opportunity employer

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Migrant workers ask Graham to save education program

By BILL KACZOR
Gannett News Service

TALLAHASSEE — A farm workers' spokesman from Immokalee asked Gov. Bob Graham and the state Cabinet Tuesday to help save Florida's pre-school education program for migrant children from the budgetary axe.

He was accompanied by a group of 40 farm workers from around the state who were angry about a Department of Education decision to eliminate the program for three- and four-year-old children as a cost-cutting move.

"Push has come to shove and we are asking the Cabinet to do some shoving," said Wendell N. Rollason, executive director of the Redlands Christian Migrant Association.

Rollason asked the panel, which sits as the state Board of Education, for assistance in obtaining a $2.5 million appropriation from the Legislature to keep the program alive.

He also asked for changes in a state plan for spending $16 million in federal migrant education funds during the next school year, contending that the plan among other things would continue to allow the federal money to be spent for programs that are supposed to be state-funded.

The Cabinet, however, approved the plan as now written after Deputy Education Commissioner Roger Nichols said he would submit amendments at the panel's next meeting in June to meet the objections. He said delaying the main body of the plan until that time would slow down the federal approval process.

Both houses of the Legislature are scheduled today to consider a $14 billion appropriations bill for funding state government during the next two years. The proposed House version includes the money needed to keep the pre-school program alive, but the Senate bill does not.

Until now the program was funded out of the annual federal allocation plus surplus carry-over dollars from previous grants. Education Department officials decided to cut out the pre-school plan because there will be no carry-over money next year and Congress has indicated Florida would not get a dollar increase despite higher costs.

The federal money is allocated according to a head-count of school-age migrant children. No dollars are allocated for those in pre-school programs.

Attorney General Jim Smith told Nichols that he could tell legislators the Cabinet believes they should address the pre-school issue. Expressing his appreciation for the support, Nichols said, "Its been a fairly lonely stuggle."

Rollason said the program is virtually a life and death matter. Without it, he said, farm workers take their children to work with them. The result has been two or three deaths each year as children are run over by trucks, fall into wells and irrigation ditches or suffocate when left in cars.

He said the migrant officials in the Department of Education responded to such contentions by saying the state is not in the baby sitting business.

Rollason said 84 percent of the migrant children who start first grade fail to receive high school diplomas and that the pre-school program is needed to give them the grounding they need to succeed in school.

Despite his criticism, Rollason lauded Nichols and Education Commissioner Ralph Turlington for trying to obtain funds when they found out that lower echelon officials had decided to end the pre-school program.

He also found a particularly interested listener in Graham because the governor had worked with his organization as one of the 100 workdays that he made a part of his election campaign. Graham also is the only member of the panel with any direct influence on the Legislature through his veto power.

Afterward, the governor said he supported the pre-school program. However, before taking any kind of action, he said he wanted to find out more about possible diversion of federal funds by local school districts for use in remedial programs.

Fort Myers News-Press, Wednesday, May 16, 1979

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Health Care for Farmworker Children

Federal reduction of health monies for children of the rural poor is having a clear, adverse effect upon farmworker children. One example: rural health clinics are having to pressure farmworker families for payment for services rendered in order to attempt to meet the strain of lesser funding. Those being pressured are responding, in many cases, by not taking their children for medical attention short of obviously critical need. Another example: tightening of food stamp regulations has cut thousands of farmworker families from qualifying for these stamps. Families are consuming less food.

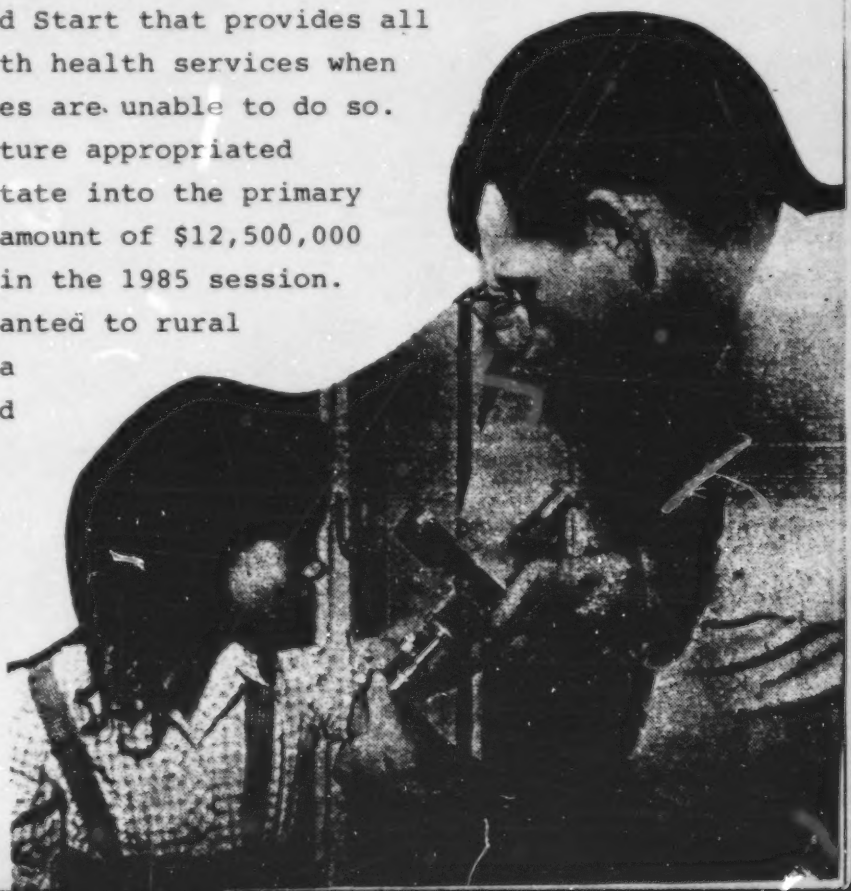
In Florida there exists a network of independent, non-profit Primary Health Care Centers that provide health services to farmworkers. These are good, conscientious operations striving to provide professional services with less resources to an increasing farmworker population. The obvious has now been reached: the point at which not all farmworker families are able to receive adequate care.

RCMA has grave concerns for this situation. With 2,500 infants and small children spending 7 to 10 hours five days a week at its child centers we are heavily involved with the health problems of these youngsters and their families. Our concern is shared by Florida's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS). RCMA is in frequent direct contact with Dr. James Howell, Deputy Secretary of the Department and Dr. Stephen King, State Health Officer, on rural health problems. Under them HRS is making its own initiatives and fully cooperating with ours.

In collaboration with the health centers we are seeking to generate funding for added health services. With the help and encouragement of Billy M. Sandlin, director of the federal Migrant Health Program, we put together a consortium of five health centers, RCMA, and East Coast and obtained funding for a two-year project that seeks to (1) identify migrant children with unmet medical needs and get them those needed services, (2) upgrade child center staff health knowledge and ability to identify illness symptoms at an early stage, and (3) provide parents with health education to upgrade family health-awareness levels. This program is based upon information developed by a 3-year Ford Foundation grant to RCMA as part of an international "Fair Start" program for Third World type populations.

Taking a page from the East Coast Special Effort Program for handicapped children, which RCMA operates in Florida, we are seeking state funds to branch out with this service to all eligible rural children in DeSoto and Lee counties.

Again, it is Migrant Head Start that provides all its enrolled children with health services when other responsible agencies are unable to do so. The 1984 Florida Legislature appropriated $10,000,000 to put the state into the primary health care picture; an amount of $12,500,000 is slated for enactment in the 1985 session. Much of this is being slanted to rural areas. This <u>does</u> place a light at the far, far end of a very dark tunnel. But it <u>is</u> a light where none existed before. The legislators who put this through need heavy support from us all.



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RUSKIN MIGRANT & COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER, INC.
P.O. BOX 1347
RUSKIN, FLORIDA 33570

Telephone (813) 645-4681

November 19, 1984

Gayla Wise
RCMA
219 North First St.
Immakolee, FL 33934

Dear Mrs. Wise:

I am writing this letter to let you and RCMA know that Faye Sandoval is doing a wonderful job. The child she has been caring for is chronically ill and was always coming in to the clinic for serious infections, usually requiring immediate hospitalizations. Since Faye has been caring for him, he has had less illnesses and no hospitalizations. When he is sick, she can give me more informative and detailed information about his problem than the mother, which gives me a clearer picture of how sick he is. She is also able to comprehend the problem and follow through with the necessary medicines or theraypy and, therefore, assist the mother in her understanding of his problem. This child is not expected to improve mentally or motorically. Faye, on her own, has been able to come to this conclusion, something the mother has yet to realize. Because of this, she is more sympathetic and understanding to the mother and beginning to prepare her for the future death of this child. She has been a big relief for this mother, who was caring for this child 24 hours a day, mostly by herself. The mother is now able to have some time by herself and for her other children. Faye has become a necessary part of this family and this child's life.

I am strongly recommending to RCMA to allow Faye to continue fulfilling this need to our "special" children and their families. And PLEASE, find more workers like her for our other special needs children.

Sincerely,

Terry C Dodds MD

Terry C. Dodds, M.D.
Ruskin Health Center

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STATE OF FLORIDA

DEPARTMENT OF
Health & Rehabilitative Services
District Three

Bob Graham, Governor

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES
P.O. BOX 1279
PALATKA, FLORIDA 32077

Barbara Mainster
Redlands Christian Migrant Assoc.
219 N. 1st. Street
Immokalee, Fl. 33934

June 15, 1984

RE: Title XX Day Care in Putnam County

Dear Ms. Mainster:

It has been one year since Title XX day care came to Putnam County through your organization. This program has made a tremendous difference to those families who have been able to take advantage of it.

All of the children placed in the day care program have been children at risk for abuse or neglect. All but a very few are active protective services cases in Putnam County. All of these families are assigned a Protective Services counselor from the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services who is responsible for the referral and all the work done with the family. The day care program is a tremendous resource for the counselors working with these families. We all feel very strongly that this program has in many instances made the difference between removing children and leaving them in their homes.

We have had wonderful cooperation from all the staff at the center. They are professional and care very much about these children. We all look forward to our continuing involvement with Redlands.

Sincerely,

Cheryl N. Dollar
Human Services Counselor Supervisor

cs
cc: DF

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EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

A Fair Start in Life

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Youngsters at a child-care center in Homestead, Florida, get ready for an outing. The center is operated by the Redlands Christian Migrant Association, which is working to improve maternal and child health among migrant farm workers. Below, Gloria Gonzalez (left), a Redlands outreach worker, counsels a mother on child care.

Gloria Gonzalez' third child, Martin, was born prematurely and weighed only three pounds. When he was eight months old, Martin had serious ear and eye problems and hardly any muscular coordination. Doctors thought he had a hopeless case of cerebral palsy. Now almost three years old, Martin walks, talks, and looks like any other child.

What made the difference for Martin was the Fair Start for Children program of the Redlands Christian Migrant Association. Redlands operates thirty-two child-care centers for migrant farm workers in Florida. In 1982, with a three-year Foundation grant, Redlands began a program to improve maternal and child health in three farm labor camps in the Homestead region south of Miami, and it plans to add two more camps in Immokalee, a tomato-growing area in southwestern Florida. Nurses on the Redlands staff train outreach workers selected from women living in the camps who seem to be natural leaders. Through home visits, the workers stress the importance of prenatal care, breast-feeding, regular weighing of infants, nutrition, and immunization. They also teach mothers simple, practical methods of checking a child's health (such as how to read a thermometer) and help them take advantage of local medical and social services.

In Gloria's case, Redlands staff first helped her place her two older children in a preschool center. Martin was given special therapy at the Homestead Fair Start Center, and the staff taught Gloria how to work with him at home. Gloria is now a Redlands outreach worker, counseling other mothers.

Redlands is one of a number of Child Survival/Fair Start programs the Foundation is supporting in the United States and developing countries. In Colombia, for example, it is assisting the Enterprise for Cooperation Toward Development (EMCODES), which has helped establish three "Casas de los Niños" (Children's Houses) in the Cauca Valley, Colombia's richest agricultural area. The region is home for large numbers of Afro-Colombians, most of whom

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combine subsistence farming with work in the sugar cane fields at a wage averaging $3 a day. Infant mortality is high, and half of their children suffer some degree of malnutrition. At primary schools serving poor communities, roughly half of the students have to repeat their grades each year.

Since 1978, EMCODES has been working with farm households to help them identify the sources of their difficulties and then take steps to improve their family and community life. One problem frequently cited is that when both parents work, the care of younger children usually falls to older brothers or sisters. But that interferes with their schooling, which is why so many have to repeat grades. Parents are also aware that their children need better nutrition and help with their intellectual development.

At the children's houses in Villarrica, Villapaz, and Puerto Tejada, preschoolers participate in games and exercises designed to stimulate their cognitive development. Primary school children get supplementary instruction and help with their homework. Programs at the houses emphasize language, basic social skills, civic values, and creativity. Afro-Colombian cultural materials are used to familiarize the children with their heritage. In the evening, the houses serve as meeting places for community groups.

These and other Fair Start for Children projects focus on the riskiest period in a child's life: conception to age five. Throughout the developing world, an estimated 40,000 infants and young children die every day, the victims of diarrheal attacks, malnutrition, and respiratory and other diseases. A number of Foundation-supported projects around the world are using simple, low-cost preventive measures to reduce the number of these deaths. For example, mothers in Bangladesh are being taught to give their children a solution of water, salt, and sugar when they have diarrhea. A project in Indonesia is experimenting with rice water as another oral rehydration treatment for diarrhea. These programs have grown from the pioneering development of oral rehydration by the Foundation-supported International Centre for Diarrheal Disease Research in Bangladesh.

The use of a simple growth chart to monitor a child's development, along with monthly weighing and advice on nutrition, could help to prevent a significant proportion of malnutrition cases in the developing world. A return to breast-feeding where that is appropriate would also promote the healthy growth of children. Foundation-supported projects in Indonesia and the Philippines are drawing on motivational and marketing approaches to counteract the notion that breast-feeding is not modern. This approach was used in Mexico, where a popular star was shown on television breast-feeding a child. A survey later revealed that many mothers had changed their attitudes toward breast-feeding as a result of the program.

At a children's house in Villarrica, Colombia, children listen attentively to an Afro-Colombian song. Enterprise for Cooperation Toward Development, a Colombian organization, has received funding for a program to improve the cognitive development of rural children.

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STATE OF FLORIDA

OFFICE OF GOVERNOR BOB GRAHAM

July 20, 1983

Mr. Wendell Rollason
Executive Director
Redlands Christian Migrant
Association
219 North First Street
Immokalee, Florida 33934

Dear Wendell:

Thank you for alerting me to the plight of infants and children of parents among the undocumented alien farmworkers here in Florida.

Problems relating to refugees and undocumented aliens have been particularly burdensome to the State of Florida and its resources. We are supportive of the Federal agencies assigned to lessen these problems. Strict law enforcement must be one of the legitimate tools employed in these efforts.

However, we never envisioned, nor can we tolerate, activities in violation of Florida's laws on abuse and neglect of any children. After our meeting on this subject, I asked INS Commissioner Alan Nelson to institute immediate measures to halt such unfortunate happenings and to assure that they do not occur in the future.

I have been briefed by my staff on the several meetings involving Federal authorities which have subsequently taken place around the State to address this and related matters concerning undocumented aliens. You and my staff have been participants in each of these discussions.

My comfort in these serious matters, brought to my attention by you, is knowing that you are out there in the rural corners of our State constantly alert to problems faced by migrant children and their parents.

With kind regards,

Sincerely,

Governor

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BG/crw

Housing for Farmworkers

Decent housing is the farmworker family's single greatest need, bar none. Housing is a subject in which RCMA has no expertise whatsoever, excepting the capacity to identify needs.

Nonetheless, we are deep into advocacy and political "leaning on" in support of those who do possess expertise and/or state governmental responsibilities for rural housing, such as Carol Noel of Florida Non-Profit Housing; Steve Mainster of Centro Campesino; Dr. John DeGrove, Secretary of the Department of Community Affairs; Richard Barrett, Director of CA's Division of Housing and Community Affairs; and his Chief of the Bureau of Housing, Lynn Ekholm.

Gov. Bob Graham has called for an aggressive rural housing program, from which farmworker families and other rural poor would benefit. This is in its very early stages.

In view of the tremendous need, the large -- enormous would be a better word -- funding necessary to make a visible dent in that need, and the present withdrawal of federal funding for such needs, one has to be either a super optimist or a fool, or both, to view the above initiative of the state as "progress." But being in the "both" category, we do. To have the state move in where the feds are withdrawing -- however little the substitute funding -- means that government still acknowledges a responsibility toward making housing <u>available</u> to all its citizens. This is important.

Meanwhile we must await the return of federal funding under another more responsive administration.